

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6360

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TAGS: EIND, LA

SUBJECT: MORNING MARKET TO BE CLOSED TEMPORARILY

1. LOCAL NEWSPAPER "VIENTIANE MAI" APRIL 19 CARRIED ARTICLE QUOTING TEM DETVONGSA, VICE PRESIDENT OF VIENTIANE PREFECTURE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE, TO EFFECT THAT MORNING MARKET (CENTRAL MARKET FOR VIENTIANE) WOULD SOON CLOSE TEMPORARILY FOR REORGANIZATION. TEM REPORTEDLY STRESSED THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH IN RUMORS THAT MORNING MARKET WOULD BE CLOSED PERMANENTLY. HE STATED TEMPORARY CLOSURE WOULD PERMIT PREFECTURE AUTHORITIES TO REORGANIZE MARKET TO INSURE BETTER HYGIENE AND TO ALLOW POLICE TO KEEP ORDER IN MARKET MORE EASILY AT PEAK MARKET HOURS. TEM IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT, WHILE MORNING MARKET IS CLOSED, THE PUBLIC CAN BUY AND SELL THEIR PRODUCTS AT VARIOUS LOCAL MARKETS OF VIENTIANE (SIKHAY, THAT LUANG AND SO FORTH). FINALLY TEM GAVE ASSURANCES THAT WORK OF REORGANIZING MORNING MARKET WOULD BE FINISHED "BEFORE RAINY SEASON."

2. IN RECENT SEMINARS VIENTIANE INHABITANTS HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT MORNING MARKET WOULD BE CLOSED FOR REPAIRS AND REORGANIZATION

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SOMETIME AROUND APRIL 23. ALTHOUGH LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE

STRESSED IN SEMINARS THAT CLOSING OF THIS CENTRAL MARKET IS MERELY TEMPORARY, RUMORS HAVE BEEN RIFE THAT MARKET WILL NOT REOPEN OR WILL CARRY ONLY CLOTH, CANNED GOODS AND OTHER FINISHED ITEMS, BUT NOT FRESH PRODUCE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO STATEMENTS BY ANY LAO AUTHORITY TO CONFIRM THESE RUMORS. NOR HAVE THERE BEEN ANY INDICATIONS THAT LAO AND THAI TRADERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO BRING FRESH PRODUCE AS USUAL TO SELL IN VARIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETS WHILE MORNING MARKET IS CLOSED. LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE ANNOUNCED IN SEMINARS THAT IT IS PROHIBITED TO BUY PRODUCE IN ONE MARKET AND TAKE IT TO ANOTHER FOR RESALE.

3. THERE IS STILL NO MEAT OR PORK AVAILABLE IN VIENTIANE MARKETS, ALTHOUGH CHICKEN, FISH AND SOME GAME MEAT ARE AVAILABLE AT WHAT ARE CONSIDERED HIGH PRICES LOCALLY. BUFFALO MEAT, BEEF AND PORK CAN BE SOLD LEGALLY ONLY IN SHOPS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS, DIPLOMATS, AND THE LAO ARMY. MORE THAN 30 STATE STORES HAVE BEEN OPENED AT TASSENG (LOCAL DISTRICT) LEVEL IN VIENTIANE TO SERVE POPULACE, BUT THESE STORES CARRY ONLY DRY AND CANNED GOODS AND RICE, NOT FRESH MEAT OR VEGETABLES OR FRUIT.

4. HOWEVER, IN ANOTHER ARTICLE IN SAME EDITION OF VIENTIANE MAY (APRIL 19), TEM DETVONGSA DECLARED THAT VIENTIANE PROVINCE AUTHORITIES ARE NEGOTIATING WITH PRIVATE LIVESTOCK OWNERS IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE AND IN KHAMMOUANE AND SAYABOURY PROVINCES TO BUY BUFFALO AND CATTLE FOR THE VIENTIANE ABATTOIRS. TEM STATED THAT VIENTIANE PREFECTURE IS ALSO STUDYING QUESTION OF WHETHER TO PUT MODERN ABATTOIR UNDER STATE OR MIXED PRIVATE/STATE DIRECTION. UNTIL MEAT CAN BE ACQUIRED FOR VIENTIANE MARKETS, TEM STATED, PREFECTURE WOULD CONTINUE TO IMPORT AND SELL CHICKEN AND FISH AT LOW PRICES. IN FACT, LAO AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN BUYING BABY CHICKS IN THAILAND, RAISING THEM AND SELLING THEM IN LOCAL MARKET AND HAVE BEEN BRINGING IN FISH FROM NAM NGUM RESERVOIR FOR VIENTIANE MARKET.

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